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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study was to investigate differences in classroom management perceptions and beliefs between traditionally trained beginning student teachers; alternative certification (AC) program participants; and traditionally trained (TC) experienced teachers. Since AC participants tended to be older than their student teacher counterparts, it was hypothesized that age could account for differences in beliefs regarding classroom management style. A second objective of this study was to determine if a relationship existed between age and perceptions of classroom management style. Data were collected from a total of 388 participants via the Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control (ABCC) Inventory and a demographic questionnaire. Results revealed that AC and TC participants were significantly more controlling than student teachers on two of the three sub-scales of the ABCC (people management and behavior management). A statistically significant correlation was also found between subjects' age and the people management sub-scale. Implications for future research and practice are discussed. (Contains 37 references.) (Author/SM)

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Teacher Experience, Training, & Age:
The Influence of Teacher Characteristics on Classroom Management Style

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study was to investigate differences in classroom management perceptions and beliefs between traditionally trained, beginning student teachers, alternative certification (AC) program participants, and traditionally trained, (TC) experienced teachers. Since AC participants tend to be older than their student teacher counterparts, we hypothesized that age could account for differences in beliefs regarding classroom management style. A second objective of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between age and perceptions of classroom management styles.

Data were collected from a total of 388 participants via the Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control (ABCC) Inventory and a demographic questionnaire. Results revealed AC and TC participants scored significantly more controlling than student teachers on two of the three sub-scales of the ABCC (People Management and Behavior Management). A statistically significant correlation was also found between subjects' age and the People Management sub-scale. Implications for future research and practice are discussed.

Teacher Experience, Training, & Age:

The Influence of Teacher Characteristics on Classroom Management Style

Creating the best learning environment possible is the primary focus of the classroom teacher's responsibilities. A huge undertaking, no doubt, this is a difficult objective to achieve. In addition to developing and organizing the curriculum, the teacher's role involves a myriad of tasks including, but not limited to, efficient management of the classroom as a whole.

Classroom management is one of the primary areas of concern expressed by both beginning and experienced educators (Johns, MacNaughton, & Karabinus, 1989; Long & Frye, 1989; Weinstein, 1996; Weinstein & Mignano, 1993; Willower, Eidell, & Hoy, 1967). However, a sizeable body of research indicates the beginning and experienced teachers differ in their approaches to classroom management. Kagan's (1992) synthesis of the learning-to-teach literature points to the idealism of student teachers and describes their ideological evolution during the student teaching semester. Although student teachers began their experience by focusing on quality lesson planning, later they began to consider pupils as the "enemy." They were overly concerned with class control and shifted the focus of lesson planning from activities designed to encourage learning to those likely to discourage disruption (Kagan, 1992). Kagan concludes that teachers focus on pupils and their learning only after they have developed an image of themselves as teachers. In an effort to survive, inexperienced teachers may resort to practices that cause the learning environment to suffer (Huling-Austin, 1990; Martin & Baldwin, 1996).

In addition to the amount of teaching experience, another important variable to consider is how teachers are prepared for the classroom environment. Historically, teachers have been

prepared by university teacher training programs. While most still come through the university ranks, a growing number are trained by alternative certification (AC) programs.

AC programs are controversial; there are strong arguments both for and against them. Compared to traditional teacher preparation programs, AC programs target a different audience. AC programs have been shown to attract more minority candidates with degrees in shortage areas (i.e.: mathematics and science) to inner city schools (Feistritzer, 1997; Shen, 1998). Participants of such programs are also likely to be older than typical beginning teachers and have experienced other careers, thus potentially enriching the traditional school climate. On the other hand, research suggests that the pedagogical knowledge (typically included in traditional teacher preparation programs) is a necessary component for quality instruction. Therefore, a primary concern is that educators " . . . who are certified alternatively have more difficulties learning to teach than those certified traditionally" (Shen, 1997, p. 277).

Within this study, classroom management style is defined as a multi-faceted construct that includes three broad, independent dimensions – Instructional Management, People Management, and Behavior Management. It is operationalized as behavioral tendencies that teachers use to conduct daily instructional activities. These tendencies reflect the teacher's discipline, communication, and instructional styles, as well as the classroom spatial management. All of these manifest in the teacher's preferences and efforts to attain desirable educational goals.

Dimension one, Instructional Management, includes aspects such as monitoring seatwork, structuring daily routines, and allocating materials. The manner in which these tasks are managed contributes to the general classroom atmosphere and classroom management style (Burden, 1995; Kounin, 1970; McNeely & Mertz, 1990; Weinstein & Mignano, 1993). Nowhere is this better documented than in Kounin's classic (1970) study of orderly and disorderly

classrooms. Concepts such as smoothness and momentum of instruction were consistently found to be characteristics of well-planned lessons that prevented off-task behaviors. More recent research has revealed similar findings (McNeely & Mertz, 1990).

The People Management dimension pertains to what teachers believe about students as persons and what teachers do to develop the teacher-student relationship. A large body of literature indicates that academic achievement and productive behavior are influenced by the quality of the teacher-student relationship (Burden, 1995; Glasser, 1986; Ginott, 1972; Gordon, 1974; Jones & Jones, 1990; Evertson, Emmer, Clements, & Worsham, 1997; Weinstein, 1996). As Weinstein (1996) explains, ". . . teachers are good when they take the time to learn who their students are and what they are like, . . . when they laugh with their students, . . . and when they are both a friend and a responsible adult" (p. 76).

The third dimension, Behavior Management, is similar to, but different than, discipline in that it focuses on pre-planned means of preventing misbehavior rather than the teacher's reaction to it. Specifically, this facet includes setting rules, establishing a reward structure, and providing opportunities for student input. Emmer, Evertson, and Anderson's classic (1980) study documented one of the primary differences between effective and ineffective classroom managers was the manner in which they formulated and implemented classroom rules. Still, classroom rules are of little assistance if students are not motivated to follow them. As Weinstein and Mignano (1993) explain, ". . . classroom order is like conversation: It can only be achieved if both parties agree to participate" (p. 88). Establishing an effective reward structure and encouraging student input can be useful tools in the prevention of misbehavior and the maintenance of order in the classroom environment.

Theoretical Framework.

Glickman and Tamashiro (1980) and Wolfgang (1995) conceptualized a framework to explain teacher beliefs regarding child development. Based on a combination of psychological interpretations, the underlying continuum of control illustrates three approaches to child development: non-interventionist, interventionist, and interactionalist. The non-interventionist presupposes the child has an inner drive that needs to find its expression in the real world. At the opposite end of the continuum are interventionists -- those who emphasize what the outer environment does to the us to cause us to develop in a particular way. The non-interventionist is the least directive and controlling, while the interventionist is most controlling. Traditional behavior modification provides the theoretical foundation for the interventionist's school of thought. Models of classroom management such as those developed by Lee Canter (1992), Fredric Jones (1987), or James Dobson (1992) are examples of the interventionist approach. Proponents of Eric Berne (1964), Thomas Harris (1967) (transactional analysis), Haim Ginott (1972) (congruent communication), or Thomas Gordon (1974) (teacher effectiveness training) are considered non-interventionists.

Midway between these two extremes, interactionalists focus on what the individual does to modify the external environment, as well as what the environment does to shape the individual. Interactionalists strive to find solutions satisfactory to both teacher and students, employing some of the same techniques as non-interventionists and interventionists. Theories developed by Alfred Adler, Rudolph Dreikurs, and William Glasser provide the framework for interactionalist ideology (Wolfgang, 1995). Cooperative Discipline (Albert, 1989) and Judicious Discipline (Gathercoal, 1990) are both examples of classroom management models that exemplify interactionalist ideology. While it is assumed that teachers believe and act according

to all three approaches, one usually predominates (Wolfgang, 1995; Wolfgang & Glickman, 1980).

The primary objective of this study was to investigate differences in classroom management perceptions and beliefs between traditionally trained, beginning student teachers, alternative certification (AC) program participants, and traditionally trained, (TC) experienced teachers. Since AC participants tend to be older than their student teacher counterparts, we hypothesized that age could account for differences in beliefs regarding classroom management style. A second objective of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between age and perceptions of classroom management styles.

Method

Sample.

Data were collected from a total of 388 participants via the Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control (ABCC) Inventory and a demographic questionnaire. Subjects were drawn from a Regional Service Center Alternative Teacher Certification (AC) Program, university graduate level courses, and student teachers. All AC subjects had earned bachelors degrees and were currently teaching in public K-12 classrooms. Their teaching experience was further augmented by coursework that mirrored the student teachers' preparation. Student teachers accounted for 41% of the subject pool; AC participants, 36.6% and experienced teachers, 22.4%. Experienced TC participants averaged 8.73 years experience; novice AC subjects averaged 1.87 years. Participants were primarily female (73.12%) and ranged in age from 21 to 58, mean age = 32.6 years. Ethnic composition of the subject pool was as follows: 5.2% African-American, 53.9% Caucasian, 35.8% Hispanic; 4.1% were of other ethnic origin.

Instrumentation.

The Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control (ABCC) Inventory, an instrument designed to measure teachers' perceptions of their classroom management beliefs and practices, consists of 26 Likert format statements and three scales: Instructional Management; People Management; Behavior Management (Martin, Yin, & Baldwin, 1998). A four-category response scale for each item was used. Beliefs were classified on the continuum originally suggested by Glickman and Tamashiro (1980) that reflects the degree of teacher power over students. Higher scores are indicative of more interventionist (controlling) ideology.

The ABCC Inventory has been shown to be a reliable, valid instrument useful in the empirical examination of classroom management styles (Martin, Yin, & Baldwin, 1998). Previous research on the concurrent validity of the ABCC Inventory shows the 3 scales are related to selected personality traits of teachers (Martin & Baldwin, 1995). Reliability coefficients for the three scales were .82, .69, and .69 for Instructional Management, People Management, Behavior Management scales, respectively (Martin, Yin, & Baldwin, 1998).

Results

Data were analyzed using a series of one-way ANOVAs and correlations. Analyses determined significant differences on the People Management and Behavior Management subscales. (See Table 1.) Independent t-tests revealed that traditionally certified teachers and AC program participants scored significantly more interventionist than student teachers on both subscales. The Instructional Management subscale did not yield significance.

Table 1.
1-WAY ANOVA: Traditionally Certified, AC, and Student Teachers & ABCC Inventory Subscales

	TC Experienced	AC Novice	Student Teachers	F	p
Instructional Management	M = 39.16 SD = 5.89	M = 40.95 SD = 5.33	M = 40.93 SD = 7.05	2.737	p = .066
People Management	M = 21.33 SD = 3.58	M = 21.99 SD = 3.68	M = 19.98 SD = 3.83	11.298	p = .000
Behavior Management	M = 11.01 SD = 2.29	M = 11.42 SD = 2.27	M = 10.38 SD = 2.05	8.510	p = .000

Further analysis revealed that student teachers were significantly younger than the other two groups (29.2 years of age). The AC (novice) and TC (experienced) teachers were similar in age (34.6 and 35.5 years, respectively). The second objective of this study examined whether a relationship exists between age and attitudes and beliefs of classroom management styles. Of the three subscales, only one, People Management, yielded a significant, albeit small, correlation. (See Table 2.) There were statistically insignificant relationships found between age and Instructional Management or Behavior Management. That there is a significant relationship between age (maturity) and the manner in which one interacts with others makes sense and is in keeping with the construct of classroom management styles as defined in this study.

Table 2.
Pearson Product-Moment Correlations of the ABCC Inventory Sub-scales with Age.

	r with Age
Instructional Management	+.023
People Management	+.123 *
Behavior Management	+.074

* $p < .05$

Summary & Discussion

Within this study, classroom management was defined as a multi-faceted construct involving three broad dimensions – Instructional Management, People Management, and Behavior Management. A continuum of control (proposed by Glickman & Tamashiro) underlies each dimension. At one extreme, the interventionist believes we are shaped by our environment. Non-interventionists, on the other hand, believe that rules tend to stifle development. The child develops best by finding his or her own way. Mid-way between these two points lies the interactionalist perspective that posits quality child development occurs as an outgrowth of the adult-child (or, in this case, teacher-student) relationship.

Data were collected from student teachers, experienced TC teachers, and novice AC teachers via the ABCC Inventory and demographics. Results revealed those who were currently teaching (both the traditionally certified and alternatively prepared) scored significantly more interventionist on the People Management and the Behavior Management sub-scales of the ABCC than student-teachers. These results can be explained, in part, by the student teachers' lack of experience in the classroom with students and their idealism toward teaching. How to develop relationships with their students (People Management), to prevent or respond to inappropriate student behavior (Behavior Management), or to even see themselves as teachers, could be aspects of classroom management one can only learn by on-the-job-training.

Undergraduate field experiences are a fine way to get the beginners' "feet wet" but they are, in many ways, only beginning to learn. In addition, the AC participants receive training in the Boys Town model of classroom management. Based on social learning theory, this paradigm would be characterized by interventionist methods and techniques.

The Instructional Management sub-scale failed to yield a significant difference. This sub-scale taps such aspects as monitoring seatwork and allocating materials. This facet of classroom management consists of "nuts & bolts" types of teacher tasks – ones that are straight forward and more concrete than the other two dimensions. Perhaps, because of the nature of this dimension, these aspects are conducive to direct instruction.

It should be noted that the only significant differences were between the student teachers and those who were actually teaching. The subjects participating in the AC program were also novice teachers, with less than one year experience in the classroom. The coursework augmenting their classroom experience was very similar to the student-teachers. In some cases, they even experienced the same instructors, yet, the AC subjects scored similar to their more experienced TC counterparts. Similar to the experienced teachers, AC subjects were significantly older than the student-teachers and with a broader variety of life experiences.

The second objective of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between age and perceptions of classroom management styles. Only one of the three sub-scales, People Management, yielded significance. As teachers increase in age, their beliefs and attitudes toward this dimension of classroom management become more controlling. Although this was not included on the demographic questionnaire, we assume the majority of the older subjects were also likely to be parents. While past research has shown a difference between novice and experienced teachers, these results give rise to a number of interesting questions. Is it teaching experience or life experience that causes this difference in the teacher's attitude? Are teachers who are also parents likely to approach their classrooms differently from those who are not parents? As the body of public school educators continues to change and diversify, these seem to be areas fruitful for future research.

These results also have sound implications for practice. The past several years has seen a change in the type of people entering all teacher preparation programs. They are likely to be older and more diverse than ever before. Never before have beginning teachers been *less* likely to be 22 years old with no previous work experience. Because the non-traditional student is likely to have the benefit of richer life experiences, teacher preparation programs should respond accordingly by tailoring their approach to their student body and abandoning a one-size-fits-all approach. These results also indicate that practical classroom experiences make a difference in teachers' perceptions and beliefs. More richly developed field training seem to be called for and can only serve to temper the beginner's idealism with realism.

Such suggestions are more complicated than they may seem on the surface. In order for these important changes to actually occur, universities must develop, nurture, and maintain quality relationships with public K-12 institutions. In addition, universities and public schools should revise the reward structure so their faculties can spend the time necessary in the field *and* be professionally successful. Without these revisions in institutional perspective, systemic change is not likely to take place.

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